

Since Fall 2012, the UW System has been building a self-paced, competency-based model called the UW Flexible Option. The goal of this undertaking is to provide quality degree and certificate programs to the nearly 700,000 adults in Wisconsin with some college and no degree. The Flexible Option will serve as an important contributor to the UW System’s goals to help more Wisconsin residents attain college degrees and address the state’s workforce needs. The UW System is the only public university developing a CBE program at the *system* level.

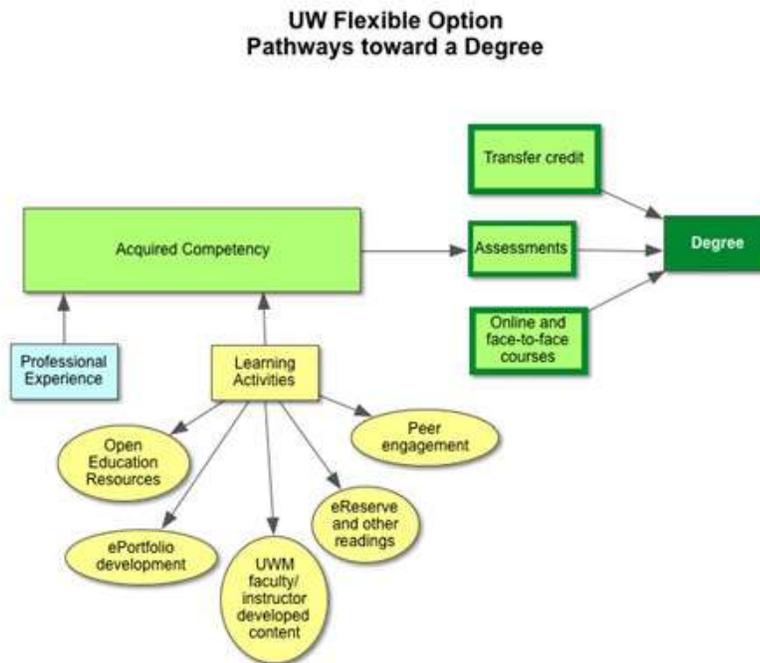
What Kind of CBE Model Are We Building?

What does it mean to do this as a system? The model we are developing involves collaboration across different kinds of UW institutions, including, in this first cohort, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin Colleges, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension (through the Division of Continuing Education, Outreach, and E-Learning).

The Academic Model

The academic development is being done by the UW System’s current faculty, and the academic degrees and certificates offered through Flexible Option will be offered by UW institutions. They will be approved and awarded by the same accreditation and faculty governance policies as all UW degrees, which decree that academic control of a Flexible Option remains under faculty and administrative shared governance within the offering UW institution. Program faculty and instructional staff determine the competencies, assessments, and appropriate levels of mastery.

This graphic explains the model and pathway to a degree.



The Administrative Model

Without seat time as the basis for awarding credit, every administrative function operates differently, including how students are admitted, enrolled, receive financial aid, pay fees, and are transcribed. UW-Extension is supporting the administration of Flexible Option offerings at each institution, and will ultimately house admissions, registrar, financial aid, and bursar functions, among other operational areas. UW institutions and UW-Extension are working collaboratively to ensure that Flexible Option students receive the academic and other support they need to help them succeed, and one of the signature features of the model is the role of the Academic Success Coach, who will work closely with each student as he or she navigates through the curriculum and the operational systems.

UW-Flexible Option won't replace the UW System's traditional, credit-based academic offerings, whether in the classroom or online. Rather, with its foundation in the *Wisconsin Idea*, and its ongoing commitment to provide affordable and accessible education to more Wisconsin residents, UW Flexible Option is designed to expand the reach of the university and meet the needs of Wisconsin residents

Key Milestones and Operational Details

Fall 2013 Flex Option programs:

- UW-Milwaukee will offer: B.S. in Nursing (degree completion-RN to BSN); B.S. in Biomedical Sciences for Diagnostic Imaging (degree completion); B.S. in Informational Sciences and Technology; and Certificate in Business and Technical Communication.
- UW Colleges will offer liberal arts, general education courses (competency sets)

Application process: The UW Flexible Option schedule is based on "subscription periods"—three-month spans of time during which students are able to access learning materials, complete assessments, and receive academic support. Students can continue to study and advance as much and as quickly as they like. The UW Flexible Option e-application will open on November 18, 2013. The first subscription period for the UW Flexible Option will begin on January 2, 2014.

Tuition: The UW Flexible Option offers two subscription choices, each with a different tuition.

- All-You-Can-Learn Option: students to complete as many competencies and assessments as they can within a three-month subscription period for a flat tuition rate of \$2,250. A "competency set" is a grouping of competencies that together define the skills and knowledge in an education area.
- Single Competency-Set Option: If students would like to study at a slower pace during a three-month subscription period, they may enroll in a single competency set. As with the *All-You-Can-Learn Option*, students must successfully demonstrate mastery of each competency in the set through a series of assessments. The tuition for this "one-set-per-subscription-period" model is \$900.